

October  
2019

# MONTHLY DATA REPORT



## Consumer Affairs Branch

California Public  
Utilities Commission



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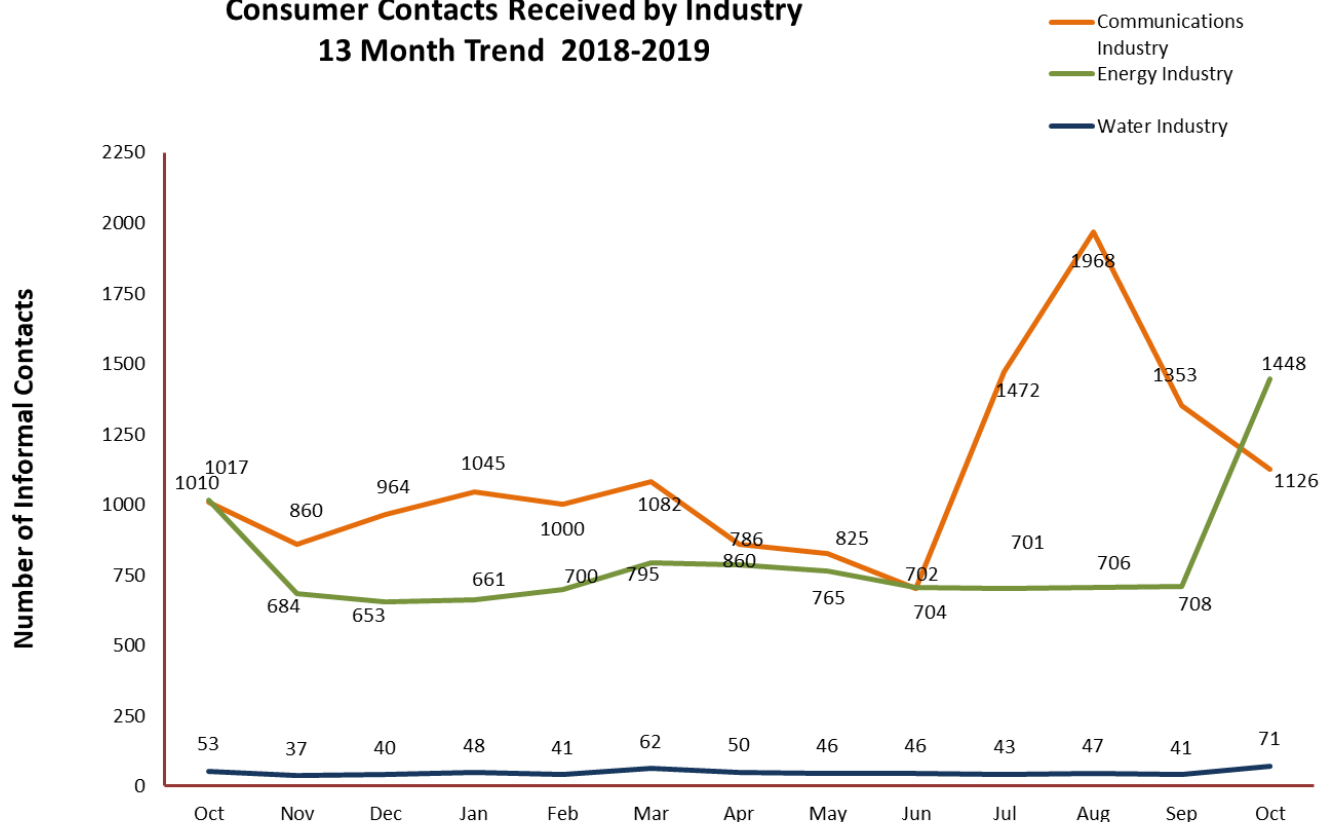
The Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) serves the public interest and the mission of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) by assisting consumers in resolving their informal complaints against service providers under the Commission's jurisdiction. CAB is proud to be able to assist consumers with an informal complaint resolution process, with answers to questions, and with referral information. In assisting consumers, we can gain a useful picture of consumer issues and trends.

This report is based on contacts (informal complaints and questions) received by the Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) and presents both annual and monthly data for the communications, energy, and water industries. Page 2 presents annual trend data and Page 3 through Page 5 report data by industry for the current month. For context, the report also includes comparable data from the previous month. Page 6 presents contact data specifically related to safety concerns, by industry. A glossary of terms used in this report can be found on Page 7.

# Overview

2,645 CONTACTS (October 2019)

**Consumer Contacts Received by Industry  
13 Month Trend 2018-2019**



Overall, 2,645 total informal consumer contacts were received during October across the three regulated industries. October 2019 shows an increase of 25.8% from the 2,102 informal contacts received during September; and a 39.8% increase from the prior 12-month average of 1,892. (*Transportation is no longer covered in the CAB Monthly report as of June 2019 which contributed to the decrease in overall Monthly report count.*)

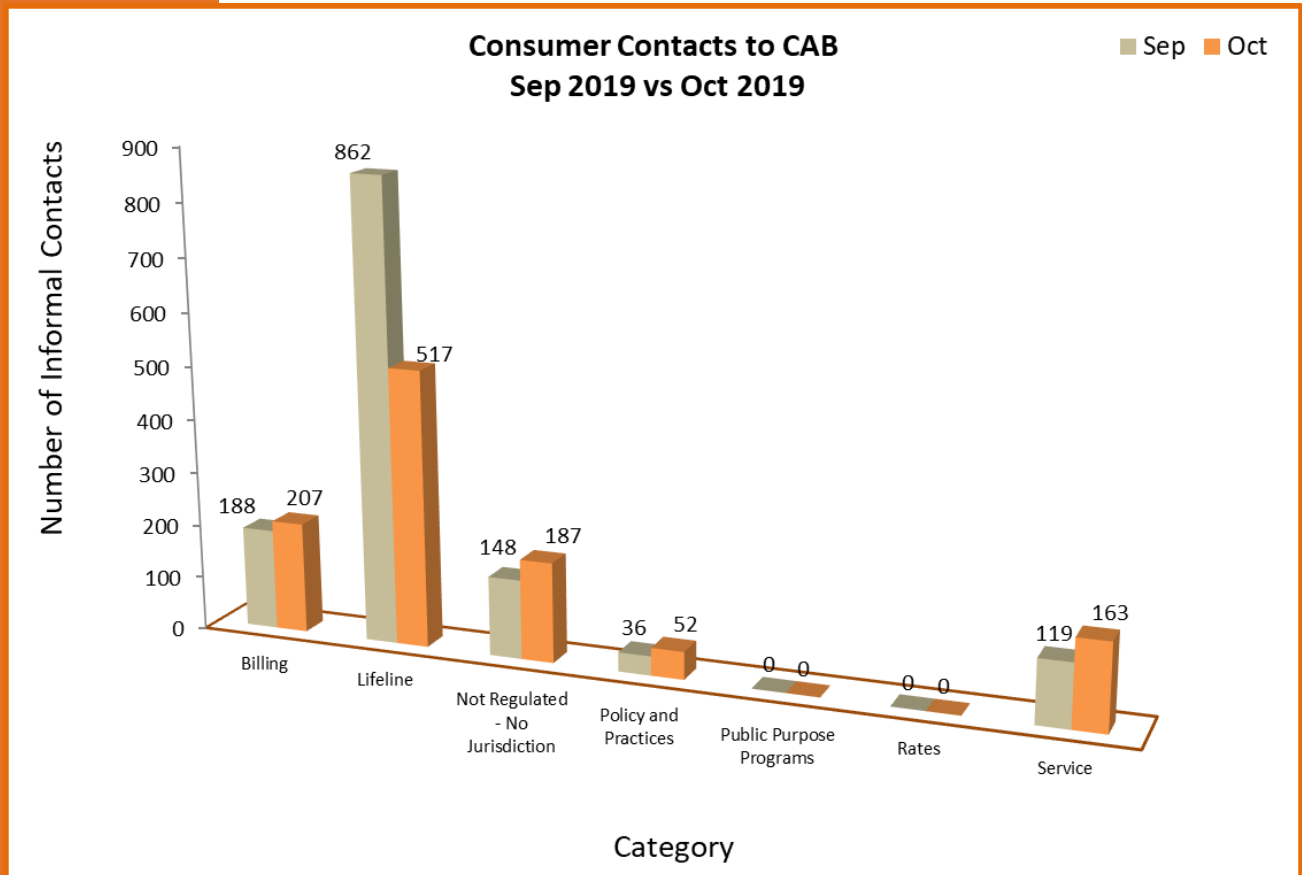
**Communications:** 1,126 categorized informal contacts related to Communications were received during October, which is a decrease of 16.8% from the 1,353 contacts received during September. The contacts received during October are 2.8% higher than the prior 12-month average of 1,095.

**Energy:** 1,448 categorized informal contacts related to Energy were received during October 2019, which is an increase of 104.5% from 708 contacts received during September. Contacts received in October are 95.7% higher than the prior 12-month average of 740.

**Water:** 71 categorized informal contacts related to Water were received during October 2019, which is an increase of 85.7% from 41 contacts received during September. Water contacts received in October are 53.8% higher than the prior 12-month average of 46.

# Communications

1,126 CONTACTS (October 2019)



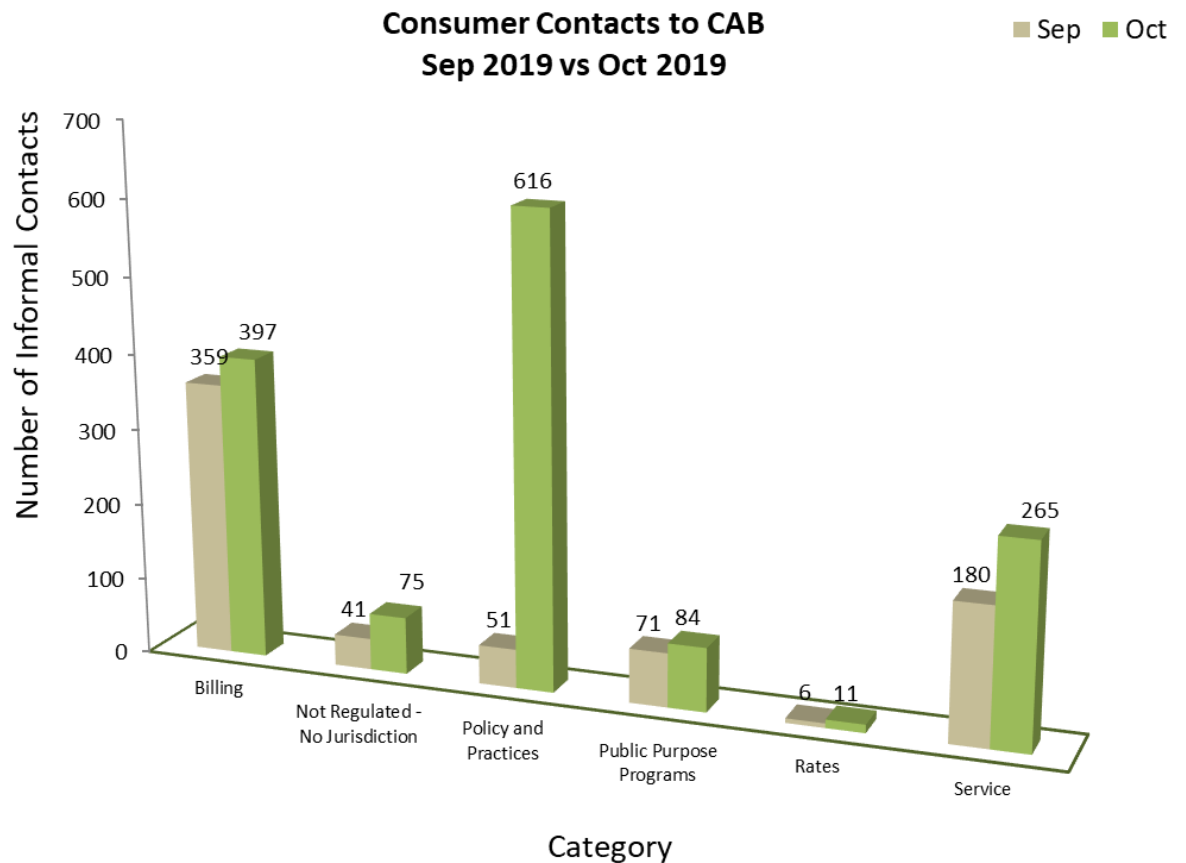
During October, CAB received 1,126 Communications-related informal contacts, allocated into one of the defined categories of Billing, LifeLine, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service.

Lifeline related contacts shows a decrease of 40.0% in October as compared to the previous month. The efficiency when it comes to processing of Lifeline cases has improved in October; which ultimately contributed to the decrease in overall Lifeline case load.

In addition to the 1,126 categorized contacts, CAB received 99 uncategorized (pending processing and misdirected) contacts.

# Energy

1,448 CONTACTS (October 2019)



In October, CAB received 1,448 Energy-related informal contacts allocated amongst the six defined categories of Billing, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service.

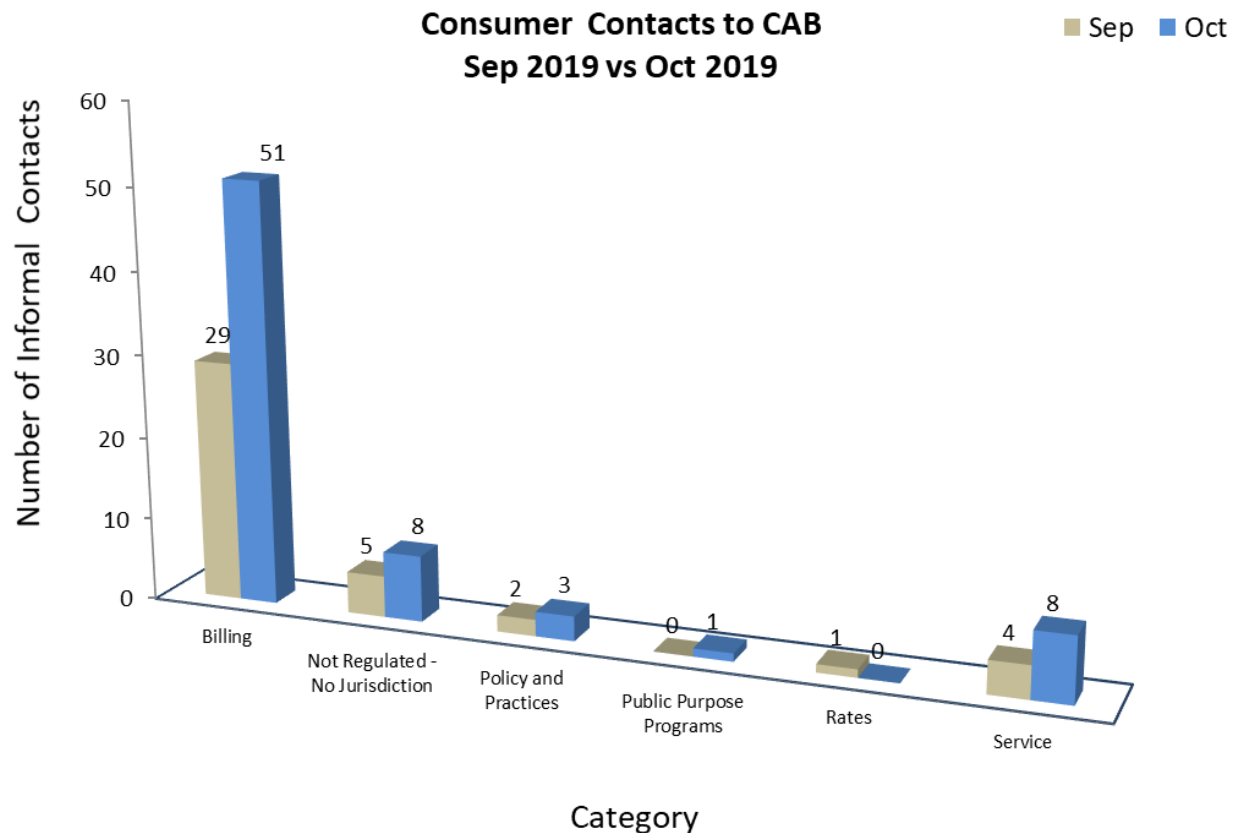
Billing related contacts show an increase of 10.6% in October as compared to the previous month. increased High Bill contacts related to PG&E and Southern California Edison were the primary contributors.

Policy and Practices contacts show a significant increase in October due to the Planned Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) performed by major energy utilities. Many customers contacted the CPUC expressed issues and concerns with PSPS. PG&E, due to its size and customer coverage was the primary contributor to contacts related to PSPS in October.

Service-related contacts show an increase of 47.2% in October. Outage cases with regards to PG&E, Southern California Gas Company, and Southern California Edison have increased due to the PSPS event.

# Water

71 CONTACTS (October 2019)



CAB received 71 Water-related informal contacts in October, allocated into one of the six defined categories of Billing, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, or Service.

Billing related cases shows an increase of 75.9% between September and October. October saw an increase in cases related to High Bill, however, it is equally distributed amongst several utilities with no particular entity as a primary contributor.

In addition to the 71 categorized contacts, CAB also received 26 uncategorized (pending processing and misdirected) contacts.

# Safety Concerns Across Industries

During October 2019, CPED received **222** contacts identified as having a safety component across reported industries. The contacts presented below are a subset of those presented on pages 3-6 of this report. Safety contacts are classified by the type of safety concern. (*Customers expressed widespread anger and dismay with regards to the PSPS event which caused the spike in Safety related contacts under Energy.*)

<b>Communications</b>	<b>23</b>
Company Practice	2
Emergency Services/Health Concerns	15
Utility Infrastructure	6

<b>Energy</b>	<b>198</b>
Company Practice	128
Emergency Services/Health Concerns	34
Gas Leak	4
Property Restoration	10
Utility Infrastructure	22

<b>Water</b>	<b>1</b>
Utility Infrastructure	1

## Definitions for Safety-Related Contacts:

**Company Practice** includes service-related issues perceived to impact consumer safety such as lengthy appointment wait times for service restoration.

**Consumer Property** includes issues with consumer owned property such as unsafe appliances (heaters, stoves, etc.)

**EMF/Power Surges/Voltage fluctuations** include cases related to Electromagnetic Field (EMF) concerns (e.g. Smart Meters), consumer household power surges and electricity voltage fluctuations.

**Emergency Services/ Health Concerns** include immediate or perceived concerns due to potential outages or events, such as inability to reach 911 during phone outage, or failure of medical equipment during power outages.

**Gas Leak** includes any concerns related to gas leaks in the utility distribution system or in the consumer's premises.

**Operating Without Active Authority** involves operations without a valid permit or certificate, including operations with a suspended or revoked permit or certificate.

**Property Restoration** includes issues regarding ground hazards such as holes, trenches, tripping hazards, debris removal, tree trimming and street lighting.

**Security Concerns** includes issues perceived to impact consumer security such as phone line privacy issues, unlisted phone numbers, or utility personnel identification.

**Utility Infrastructure** includes issues regarding infrastructure that is faulty or in disrepair such as hanging cables, exposed wires, leaning utility poles, analog meters and transformers.

**Water Safety or Quality** includes immediate or perceived concerns relating to water quality such as color, odor or presence of chemicals in drinking water.

# Definitions

## Consumer Affairs Branch

The following definitions were compiled to assist with understanding consumer contacts information.

Type of Contacts Definitions	
Informal Consumer Contacts	Informal Contacts are consumers' communications received by CAB via phone calls, letters and electronic submissions (email/web form). Contacts can consist of complaints, questions, or feedback from consumers regarding the policies and practices of specific utilities or the CPUC. These contacts are reported as Categorized or Uncategorized.
Categorized Contacts	These are informal contacts which have sufficient information to be allocated into one the defined categories: Billing, Lifeline, Not Regulated-No Jurisdiction, Policy and Practices, Public Purpose Programs, Rates, and Service based on the primary (overarching) reason for the contact.
Uncategorized Contacts	These are contacts which are pending assignment, lack sufficient information to be processed (Unknown), or contacts in which the consumer intended to contact some other entity, and mistakenly contacted CAB (Misdirected).

Category Definitions	
Billing	Consumer contacts related to disputed items appearing on a consumer's utility bill, the appearance of the bill, or other utility charges.
LifeLine (Billing & Appeals)	Consumer contacts related to the Lifeline Program, which assists low income telecommunications customers. It includes items related to Lifeline Appeals or Lifeline Billing disputes.
Not Regulated – No Jurisdiction	Consumer contacts related to concerns, disputes, and issues where the CPUC does not have jurisdiction.
Policy and Practices	Consumer contacts related to utility and/or CPUC policies and practices.
Public Purpose Programs	Consumer contacts related to programs that assist utility consumers, including income-based and disability-based programs.
Rates	Consumer contacts related to rate design, rate protests and baseline rates.
Service	Consumer contacts related to the service provided to the consumer by the utility.
Uncategorized Definitions	
Misdirected	Consumer contacts intended for some other entity such as consumer attempting to contact their utility. CAB assists these consumers by redirecting them to the entity best able to address their concerns.
Pending Assignment	Category not identified due to case pending processing.
Unknown	Category not identified due to lack of information from consumer.